

Appendix 4

LANDOWNERSHIP ADJUSTMENT STRATEGY FOR THE BLM-ADMINISTERED PUBLIC LANDS IN THE NEWCASTLE FIELD OFFICE, WYOMING

PURPOSE OF THE LAND ADJUSTMENT STRATEGY

The purpose of this land adjustment strategy is to provide general guidance to the land adjustment program for the Newcastle Field Office in order to accomplish plan objectives of the resource area. The strategy will be useful in guiding land exchange negotiations as well as other land adjustment actions with landowners and discussing the overall program with the public.

The strategy provides general direction for federal land adjustments and may be modified or amended as new information and/or opportunities become evident. The strategy does not make hard and fast decisions on land adjustment; it provides concepts. Specific land adjustment proposals will be analyzed using the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) process including public participation. Decisions to implement a specific proposal will be based on the specific NEPA analysis and finding that the proposal is in the public interest and consistent with the land use plans, and applicable laws and regulations.

Goals

The overall goals are:

1. to develop a landownership pattern that will provide better access to, and better management and protection of the public lands;
2. to identify and pursue appropriate disposal actions of public land to private individuals and/or for management by other federal or state agencies to help solve problems related to intermixed landownership patterns; and
3. to implement and accomplish landownership adjustment in a timely, cost-effective manner while continuing to streamline processes.

Objectives

These following objectives will tier to the resource management plan with emphasis on land adjustment

using exchanges, including assembled land exchanges.

1. Provide or improve public access and recreation use and opportunities by consolidating landownership pattern and acquiring easement through land adjustment.
2. Reduce conflicting land management objectives between private landowners and the BLM.
3. Improve resource management of BLM-administered public lands and other federal lands to meet planning direction and allow implementation of an ecosystem management approach.
4. Acquire lands within critical wildlife habitat areas, special management areas such as areas of critical environmental concern, or riparian areas according to planning direction.
5. Improve cost-effective management practices and cost efficiency of management objectives by reducing administrative costs.

JUSTIFICATION FOR A LAND ADJUSTMENT PROGRAM

The intermingled landownership pattern in the Newcastle Field Office planning area makes it especially difficult for both the BLM and the private landowners to achieve their individual management objectives and inhibits management effectiveness and efficiency. In striving to meet its planning objectives, the Newcastle Field Office will plan and use landownership adjustment to consolidate public lands into more manageable and accessible units to further benefit the public and to more effectively initiate and continue management practices. The intent of landownership adjustment is not to increase the federal land estate, but to consolidate parcels into more efficient and manageable patterns.

An issue and comments from past scoping meetings involved access to and recreation potential on

public lands. Another area of interest over the past several years from both adjoining landowners and the general public was the desire to acquire many of these isolated public land parcels. Also, with the onset of range reform and the uncertainty of grazing lease fees, landowners surrounding isolated, scattered parcels of public lands within their ranch units have voiced their growing interest in purchasing these lands. These scattered, isolated public lands are both expensive and difficult to manage, and more efficiency would be gained while better serving the public by disposing of these parcels. In exchange for many of these disposal parcels, lands or easements could be acquired through avenues such as "assembled land exchanges" where several different federal and/or private parcels are combined and exchanged in one or more transactions over time. The expense of conducting the exchange could be distributed among several different participants and a higher dollar value could be used to exchange for lands or public interest therein that the BLM has identified for high priority acquisition in accordance with land use plans.

LAND ADJUSTMENT PROGRAM

It is anticipated that land exchanges will provide the greatest opportunity to improve the landownership

pattern. No exchange will be completed without a determination that the public interest will be well served according to 43 CFR 2200.06 (b).

In order to minimize impacts to the local governments, such as loss of Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT), preference should be given to acquiring lands in counties where these public lands are to be disposed.

LAND ADJUSTMENT EVALUATION CRITERIA

The acquisition and disposal evaluation and ranking criteria shown on the following pages were approved on October 11, 1995. They were developed by an interdisciplinary team referred to as the Casper District Land Exchange Team (LET) comprised of members from the resource areas and the district. Though the BLM has since reorganized into field offices that report directly to the State Director, the product the LET developed is still valid. The criteria they used were derived from laws, regulations, policy, program/resource management experience, and planning decisions. The Newcastle Field Office will continue to use the criteria in evaluating land adjustment proposals.

Acquisition Criteria

Given: Acquisition of land has to have and/or provide public access that can be managed effectively and cost efficiently according to BLM goals and initiatives. Can this given be met?

Yes ☐

No ☐

(If **yes** continue completing ranking criteria)

Explain: (that is, uncontrolled access, restricted or cooperative)

Ranking Criteria (Points Awarded)		Points
I. Public Values		
A. Recreation		
1. Hunting		
a. Big Game		
(1) Multiple species (15 points)		
or		
(2) Single species (10 points)		
b. Small Game		
(1) Multiple species (15 points)		
or		
(2) Single species (10 points)		
2. Fishing (15 points)		
3. ORV Use (If meets planning or public demand objectives)		
a. Present (5 points)		
b. Potential (5 points)		
4. Scenic (0-15 points in increments of 5 points) *(Based on visual resource management ratings)		
5. Other Recreation Value(s) (5 points each) (Specify)		

Acquisition Criteria Ranking Criteria (Continued)

B. Resource(s) Management

* If the resource value is present, would the value(s) acquired or consolidated be/add to the cost efficiency and manageability of them by BLM/federal agency by completing the land adjustment.

1. Improves cost and management efficiency in:

a. Cultural Resources (5 points)

b. Forestry Resources (5 points)

c. Valuable Historic Resources (5 points)

d. Minerals Resources (5 points)

(1) Oil and Gas Leases ☐

(2) Coal Leases ☐

(3) Locatables ☐

(4) Salables ☐

e. Paleontological Resources (5 points)

f. Range Resources (5 points)

g. Watershed(5 or 10 points)

h. Wildlife Resources (habitat) (5 points)

i. T & E Species (5 points)

j. Other _____ (5 points)

C. Unique Opportunities (5-50 points in increments of 5)

Explanation:

Note: Unique opportunities may also be qualified by factors that aid in the economics of the opportunities; (i. e. proponent shares a percentage of the expenses on the evaluation of the public land. Such expenses as the costs of cultural inventory, T&E, appraisal, etc.)

II. Provide access to blocks of consolidated federal land or State (?) lands.

5 points for 1-640 acres

10 points for 640-2000 acres

15 points for 2,000-5,000 acres

20 points for 5,000-10,000 acres

30 points for 10,000 + acres

Total Points

Acquisition Criteria
Ranking Criteria (Continued)

[illegible]